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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 05 DOHA 000854

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SUBJECT: QATAR OUTLINES DARFUR STRATEGY TO SE WILLIAMSON

REF: A. PARIS 2251

[1](#)B. DOHA 839

Classified By: Ambassador Joseph E. LeBaron, for reasons 1.4 (b, d).

(C) KEY POINTS:

-- Senior Qatar officials described for the Special Envoy the sequential elements of Qatar's Darfur strategy:

First, meetings between MFA State Minister al-Mahmoud with UN-AU Mediator Bassole to agree on a common diplomatic strategy on Darfur (in Doha, late November/early December)

Second, a ministerial meeting of the 12-member African-Arab steering committee co-chaired by Qatar's Prime Minister, the Arab League Secretary-General, and the African Union's Jean Ping. (Doha, mid-December)

Third, a Darfur peace conference that brings together representatives of the Government of Sudan, rebel groups, and others. However, no conference will be held if it will not lead to concrete action on the ground in Darfur. (Doha, January)

-- At the Darfur conference, Qatar would follow the same pattern as during the Lebanese mediation: bring the parties to a hotel in Doha; lock down the hotel; have an opening ceremony; establish committees and exercise shuttle diplomacy to bridge the gaps; and ultimately bring the parties to the same table when it would be productive to do so.

-- Meanwhile, Qatar's Amir, Prime Minister, and MFA State Minister are deeply engaged in contacts with Sudanese President Bashir, neighboring states such as Libya and Egypt, and involved European states, such as France and the U.K.

-- The Prime Minister alluded to financial pressure Qatar was putting on Bashir, but he stopped short of provided details. He suggested, too, that Qatar was looking at the money flows to Bashir, and how to influence them.

-- Ambassador Williamson said Qatar could be more successful than the P-3 in moving President Bashir to action, but that success would be contingent on the rebels eventually stepping up as well. It will be delicate moving them from their comfort zone, but this is an area where the P-3 can help.

-- Ambassador Williamson noted that the recent actions by the ICC may make the Government of Sudan more willing to look seriously now at necessary steps toward a peace process: power-sharing, compensation, and some autonomy for the rebels. He encouraged Al-Mahmoud to be firm, realistic, and direct with the Sudanese Government. Qatar's financial resources would be of help in securing a deal.

(C) Comments

-- Presidential Special Envoy Williamson's visit was extremely effective. Ambassador Williamson established key working relationships with the Qataris, who were candid and

responsive.

-- The Qataris made it clear that they were prepared to work closely and cooperatively with the USG, realizing that USG support and involvement was critical to the success of their initiative.

-- The Prime Minister's comments about financing provide a brief glimpse into Qatari diplomacy. The Al Thani ruling family is accountable to virtually no one on its financial ties to regional states and leaders. That gives the Al Thani leadership great latitude in using money as a key instrument of diplomacy.

End Key Points and Comments.

¶1. (C) In a November 24 meeting with Prime Minister Hamad bin Jassim Al Thani (Shaykh Hamad), the President's Special Envoy for Sudan Richard Williamson, accompanied by Ambassador, said he was pleased to be in Doha to discuss Qatar's Initiative on Darfur. Shaykh Hamad replied that Qatar needs the assistance of all parties, and he appreciated the Special Envoy's visit as Qatar tries to rise above regional spoilers⁸ who could kill a deal on Darfur. The PM added that he and State Minister for Foreign Affairs Ahmed Al-Mahmoud are looking at mid-December for the African Union-Arab League Ministerial Steering Committee on Darfur to meet in Doha for further consultations.

¶2. (C) U.S./QATAR SHARE SAME GOAL: Envoy Williamson responded that the U.S. and Qatar share the same goal: the desire for concrete results on the ground in Darfur. The agreement signed in Abuja led to some embarrassment, since the expected results from it never fully materialized. Close coordination would allow us to reach our mutual goal: putting an end to the suffering on the ground. Noting that

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he reports directly to President Bush and is the only Special Envoy who does so, Ambassador Williamson underscored that restoring security to Darfur is a U.S. goal that goes beyond the current Administration; President-Elect Obama and Vice President-Elect Biden had expressed a keen interest in the Senate in the positive role the U.S. could play.

¶3. (C) Ambassador Williamson offered that joint cooperation on Darfur could serve as a bridge to cooperation across Administrations and help achieve success on Darfur. The major challenge is to break the habit where Darfur and agreements on it are concerned that words do not matter. The Sudanese Armed Forces and the rebels have both violated previous agreements not long after they were signed.

¶4. (C) ROLE OF BASSOLE: Special Envoy Williamson underscored how well respected is UN and African Union Darfur Mediator Djibril Bassole, offering that his expertise on Africa would be an asset to Qatar, as the Qataris seek to alleviate suspicions in certain quarters of Arab League involvement. Fortunately, Qatar's successful mediation of the Lebanese conflict helped differentiate Qatar from the rest of the Arab League.

¶5. (C) Ambassador Williamson told the PM it is in the U.S. interest to support Qatar's Initiative on Darfur, and the U.S. intends to help strengthen the hand of Bassole and Qatar. The Special Envoy added that he had told Secretary Rice that Qatar and Bassole should work together and complement what each other brings to the mediation effort. Shaykh Hamad responded that he had told Secretary Rice the same.

¶6. (C) USING THE LEBANON MODEL FOR SUDAN: The Prime Minister observed that bridging internal differences of opinion within the Sudanese Government would also be required. The PM said, for example, he detected a rift between the President and Vice President that would not be conducive to forward progress. At the end of the day, when the time is right, said Shaykh Hamad, the government and opposition of Sudan need to bridge their gaps in Doha. Qatar would follow the same pattern as during the Lebanese mediation: bring the parties to a hotel in Doha; lock down the hotel; have an opening ceremony; establish committees and exercise shuttle diplomacy to bridge the gaps; and ultimately bring the parties to the same table when it would be productive to do so.

¶17. (C) Special Envoy Williamson cautioned that the biggest obstacle to the approach is the Sudanese parties, history of violence and inexperience with peaceful adjudication. Peaceful discussions take the key players out of their comfort zone, but this is exactly what needs to happen in order for Qatar and Bassole to succeed. The P-3 can be of help in this regard. Khalil Ibrahim benefits from the biggest armed group and Abdul Wahid the most adherents (1.7 million people in IDP camps). Both must come to the table if an agreement will be achieved, stressed Ambassador Williamson. The PM agreed.

¶18. (C) BRINGING IN CHAD: Ambassador Williamson said it is also vital for the bleeding along Sudan's border with Chad to stop. The PM responded that Ibrahim benefits from Chad's support; President Bashir must also help. Qatar would continue its efforts with Presidents Bashir and Deby to calm the border. The PM said the Amir would continue to talk to President Bashir by phone, and the Sudanese leader was expected to arrive in Doha November 29. The Amir had offered to send a plane for President Deby, but he has not confirmed his participation.

¶19. (C) It is vital, said Shaykh Hamid, to bring President Bashir of Sudan and President Deby of Chad to Doha in order to fix the personal problems between them. Libya remains sensitive about Qatar's involvement, so the Amir would call Qaddafi again soon to reiterate that Qatar welcomes Libya's help and efforts. The PM noted that Minister of State Al-Mahmoud and Bassole would meet soon (probably the first week in December) to discuss how to move the mediation process forward.

¶110. (C) PRESSURING THE REBELS: Turning to Abdul Wahid, who is residing in Paris, Shaykh Hamad said the Amir had told President Sarkozy that Abdul Wahid needs to cooperate or lose the privilege of staying in France. Ambassador Williamson said the U.S. agrees and he would make the same point to the French in early December. (See Ref A.)

¶111. (C) Special Envoy Williamson returned to the importance to Qatar of Bassole, a sub-Saharan African who can complement Qatar in areas where the Qataris will be tainted by its Arab League affiliation. He stressed again that the U.S. would support both Qatar and Bassole as the mediation goes forward, hoping to break the pattern of delay, diversion and denial of which the Government of Sudan is especially guilty following

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agreements with the rebels.

¶112. (C) PRESSURING KHARTOUM: The Prime Minister told Ambassador Williamson Qatar would use financial levels to bring around the Government of Sudan and that the GOQ had told Khartoum that Qatar's financial support will stop if it does not help the GOQ achieve a solution. The PM added that Qatar is not striking out to do its own thing to resolve the crisis in Darfur. Qatar's aim is to collect ideas and reach a plan satisfactory to the region and to the international community, including on bringing to justice those who may have committed crimes in Darfur.

¶113. (C) Taking up the actions by the International Criminal Court (ICC), Ambassador Williamson noted that these proceedings are affecting Khartoum's thinking and are pressure on the regime. While we cannot link Article 16 proceedings to the ongoing mediation, the pressure on Bashir and those around him can nevertheless encourage them to do what is in their own best interest. Shaykh Hamad offered that when ICC Prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo visited Doha, the GOQ tried to broker a deal on the indictments, but it fell apart over the Sudanese Government's insistence on written assurances which Ocampo could not provide.

MEETING AT MFA

¶114. (C) In a separate meeting and lunch with Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Al-Mahmoud (who attended the PM's meeting with Ambassador Williamson), the U.S. Special Envoy welcomed Al-Mahmoud's willingness to accept leadership on a conflict that was replete with broken commitments and violence. The U.S. supports Qatar's Initiative on Darfur and

shares Qatar's goal of alleviating humanitarian suffering there. The Special Envoy recounted in detail the humanitarian suffering in Sudan based on his visits to Sudanese camps for internally displaced persons. He highlighted the violence earlier this year in Abyei, where schools, homes and hospitals were burned to the ground. Ambassador Williamson said he raised Abyei and the Sudanese Government's unfulfilled promise allowing joint integrated police units to permit the safe return of its displaced residents as an example of the failure to follow through on signed agreements that is all too common.

¶15. (C) NEED TO ESTABLISH TRUST AMONG PARTIES: A major problem, Ambassador William identified, is the rebel groups, lack of trust in the Government's promises. The rebels point to the failed Abuja Agreement of April 2006 as an example. Minni Minawi signed the Darfur Peace Agreement but eventually left his office in Khartoum because of broken government promises. A second government agreement with Minawi ten weeks ago remains unfulfilled.

¶16. (C) Ambassador Williamson underscored that he did not mean to discourage Al-Mahmoud. Rather, he sought to stress the extent of the challenge to go beyond promises to performance. The good news is the bleeding on the border with Chad, international pressure, and the ICC indictments may make the Government of Sudan more willing to look seriously now at power-sharing, compensation, and some autonomy for the rebels. He encouraged Al-Mahmoud to be firm, realistic, and direct with the Sudanese Government.

¶17. (C) The Special Envoy said he did not doubt Qatar's sincerity and that many key countries beyond the Middle East welcome and support Bassole's and Qatar's efforts on Darfur. Qatar's substantial financial resources could also help advance some issues with respect to Darfur.

¶18. (C) ICC INDICTMENTS A LEVER: Taking up the ICC indictment issue, the Ambassador Williamson noted that there are only seven votes at present in the Security Council) two short of the needed nine) to defer any indictments. This is a pressure point on the Sudanese leadership that can be exploited.

¶19. (C) WORKING TOGETHER: Special Envoy Williamson provided Al-Mahmoud with his contact information and made clear that both he and Ambassador would provide as much support as possible to Qatar. The Special Envoy stressed that cooperation on Darfur is a platform that serves as a bridge between Administrations in Washington and one that he would help Qatar to traverse.

¶20. (C) Ambassador Williamson reiterated that Bassole and Qatar can carry out different functions and complement each other's efforts in coordinated fashion. There are things Qatar can do that Bassole cannot and vice-versa.

¶21. (C) Al-Mahmoud thanked the Special Envoy for his advice and support and stated that Qatar has no agenda other than humanitarian. Saving the residents of the camps and solving the Darfur crisis is the primary problem we face. Al-Mahmoud said he saw much misery and suffering in the camps. The

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residents told him they do not trust the Arab League. A solution to what ails Darfur will require a collective effort. Qatar is in and intends to be in close coordination⁸ with Bassole.

¶22. (C) BRINGING IN THE REBELS: Turning to contacts with the rebels, Al-Mahmoud said he attempted to meet with Abdul Wahid in Paris and was rebuffed. Khalil Ibrahim said he did not want Arab League involvement. The Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) plans to send a delegation to Doha, Abdul Wahid as well. Al-Mahmoud said he will meet with any rebel leaders to advance the prospects for peace. Unconcerned about politicians in hotels or palaces,⁸ Al-Mahmoud made clear his sole aim is to save people in the camps.

¶23. (C) Al-Mahmoud said Qatar aims to hold a conference of all the Sudanese parties but will not do so if the conference will not lead to changes on the ground. Al-Mahmoud said he was clear on this point in his media interviews in Sudan; Qatar will not embarrass its partners over a lack of implementation.

¶24. (C) ROLE FOR KHARTOUM AND ITS NEIGHBORS: On implementation, Al-Mahmoud said he told the Government of Sudan we need full implementation of agreements. Vice President Taha said he would take some action. Al-Mahmoud observed that the government needs to take action to show the rebels that we are moving in the right direction. There are some positives in the Sudanese People's Initiative, but we can obtain more. The Sudan conflict extends beyond Sudan to neighboring borders. Libya claims to be on board, but we've had indications of Libyan slippage. The Amir will talk to Qaddafi. The Egyptians also say they are with us. Of course, Qatar proposed extending the Arab League's involvement to African states. We will work with everyone, Al-Mahmoud emphasized.

MAIN CHALLENGES AHEAD FOR QATAR, BASSOLE

¶25. (C) Al-Mahmoud described the main challenges in his upcoming consultations with Bassole as 1) arriving at a common position on approaching rebel groups; 2) dealing with the fragmentation of the rebels in the context of an eventual issuance of invitations for discussions in Doha; and 3) whether to build on the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) already signed or to start from scratch. Alongside the above, Al-Mahmoud noted the need to transform the contempt for the Abuja Agreement into a togetherness for forward progress. He also expressed concern that the 2009 DPA elections timetable would complicate the current mediation efforts, noting we did not want to change one problem for another. In the end, we need to move quickly to alleviate the humanitarian problems.

¶26. (C) Al-Mahmoud asked Special Envoy Williamson for advice for three components he sees as vital. 1) Establishing common understandings of the parties in areas of justice, compensation, economic development, etc. 2) Identifying and enacting confidence-building measures 3) Moving toward an agreement on peace in Darfur and national reconciliation.

¶27. (C) Against this backdrop, Al-Mahmoud believed it is important to speak frankly to all parties and that no party should hold the process hostage. This is why seeking help from the French to push Abdul Wahid is important. Finally, Al-Mahmoud had the sense it would be important at some point to bring civil society on board with a solution. Timing is the key. He would discuss this with Bassole.

¶28. (C) Special Envoy Williamson responded that Al-Mahmoud's reputation for skill in diplomacy did not disappoint. Responding to Al-Mahmoud's points, Ambassador Williamson said Qaddafi needs to be a leader on Darfur and it is in Egypt's interest to forge a solution on Sudan, where the Nile has its source. Pleased that a JEM delegation was coming to Doha, the Special Envoy nevertheless cautioned that JEM may be coming to find excuses for not participating in the mediation process. As far as groups at the table, Khalil Ibrahim, Abdul Wahid, and Minni Minawi are vital. The Darfur Peace Agreement (what Al-Mahmoud termed the CPA) should be considered a failure, even though some of its elements could form the basis for new consultations. On a cease-fire, the U.S. had given consideration to monitoring mechanisms. This is an area where the U.S. could help. As for elections, no vote in Sudan would take place before 2010 given the current state of organization and logistics.

¶29. (C) Over lunch, Special Envoy Williamson remarked that there are too many spoilers and not enough builders in Darfur. Al-Mahmoud said he had the same sense. When the Arab League-African Union Committee on Darfur asked Qatar to take the lead, Al-Mahmoud said he insisted on visiting with the people of Sudan and not make a plan in the office. Now, said Al-Mahmoud, we are moving toward a plan. Bassole will

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visit; we will develop a strategy as we prepare for a ministerial of the Arab League-African Union Committee in mid-December.

¶30. (C) ROLE OF ARAB-AFRICAN COMMITTEE: Al-Mahmoud offered that the Committee was designed to work with both Qatar and Bassole to plan the conference between the rebels and the Sudanese Government, but the reality is that Al-Mahmoud and

Bassole are coordinating with each other and the Committee members are merely lending support. Still, it is vital to keep them on board by consulting with them; this is the purpose of the mid-December Ministerial which the PM discussed. In short, said Al-Mahmoud, we are continuing our homework with Bassole but keeping the others in the picture.

¶31. (C) On President Bashir's intransigence, Al-Mahmoud said the Amir continues to make clear to him that Qatar will not move to a conference without assurances of his government's cooperation. Ambassador Williamson responded that the rebels eventually would have to step up as well. It will be delicate moving them from their comfort zone, but France, the UK, and the U.S. can help. Qatar, meanwhile, would be more successful than the P-3 in moving President Bashir to action.

¶32. (C) Al-Mahmoud said he was optimistic that Qatar and its partners would succeed, because God knows that Qatar has good intentions. Ambassador Williamson said that this is also his sincere wish. He said he would brief President Bush in writing in early December on his meetings in Qatar and will see him in person later in the month. The Special Envoy said he would speak well of Al-Mahmoud and Qatar's efforts to both President Bush and the Transition Team (which he would also brief) and was heartened by Qatar's common vision with the U.S. of achieving compensation, power-sharing and making progress on the ground to combat the violence perpetrated by security guards, rebels, bandits, militias, and the armed forces. Finally, Special Envoy Williamson noted that U.S. questions about the extent of Qatar's cooperation with Bassole had been fully resolved.

¶33. (SBU) Delegation members:

Qatar

Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Ahmed Al-Mahmoud;
Director for European and American Affairs Adel Al-Khal;
Youssef Khalifa Abdulla Al-Sada (Al-Mahmoud's office);
Khalifa Al-Soweidi (Al-Mahmoud's office);
Unidentified member of MFA Legal Affairs

United States

Ambassador to Qatar Joseph LeBaron;
Special Envoy for Darfur Richard Williamson;
Jana Chapman Gates (AF/SE);
Genevieve McKeel (AF/SE)
P/E Chief Rice

¶34. (U) Special Envoy Williamson has cleared this message.
LeBaron